



University votes on Women's Degrees 1897.

Cambridge UNIVERSITY WOMEN Chronicle, by Mike Petty  
**c.36.98 : University - women**

1873

The very first girl student to attend University lectures in Cambridge, Miss Dove, is going to be the first lady mayor in English history. She must not be confused with the common or garden suffragette. All her life she has been something of a pioneer. She was one of the little group of twelve ladies who enrolled at Miss Emily Davies' college, then carried on at Hitchin, and the very first to enter the new building at Girton where the students re-assembled in October 1873 CWN 08 10 30 p5

**1890**

1890

Phillipa Fawcett placed above Senior Wrangler in part 1 Maths Tripos (appointed Principal Assistant London County Council Education Department in 1905) [4.2, 7.20]

1895

Training college for women teachers new building [13]

1897 05 05

While the members of the University Senate are engaged in a fierce contest to decide whether women shall be admitted to the titles of degrees, the undergraduates have given most emphatic expressions to their opinion. A committee was formed and within six days over 2,100 signatures (the total number of undergraduates and Bachelors is only 2,840) have been sent to a memorial expressing the conviction

that the giving of degrees to women would prove injurious to the position and efficiency of the University as a University for men 1897 05 05

1897 05 12

Last night a brilliant debate took place in the Debating Hall of the Cambridge University Union on the question of Women's Degrees. Mr T.F.R. McDonnell of St John's College said that one would suppose that as soon as the report had been passed a plague of women would descend upon Cambridge and infest everything. It was asked why women did not found a University of their own. A University was not built in a day and this would not prevent them from building one 1897 05 12

1897 05 21

After the Senate House scenes yesterday (when the University voted against degrees for women) there was a brief respite. It was the calm before the storm. About 7 o'clock there was a grand gathering of the clans. Undergraduates began trooping through the streets to what was obviously a pre-arranged rendezvous - the Market Hill. From the four corners of the square fire was opened upon everybody and everything within range. Bombs, hand-rockets, and every description of firework manufactured were flung haphazard into the crowd until the scene resembled nothing so much as the bombardment of a hostile camp. It is no exaggeration to say that hundreds of pounds worth of stuff were got rid of during the five hours the proceedings lasted 1897 05 21

1897 05 21

'The University of Cambridge' (the "Daily News" thinks) 'has not improved its reputation for sense and judgement by its votes (not to award women degrees). Not a single argument worthy of the name has been produced in favour of the decision'. 'Of the wisdom shown by the Cambridge Senate there can be but one opinion' (says the "Morning Post"). 'In rejecting by an overwhelming majority the Graces for giving Titles of Degrees to ladies they have done much to revive the reputation of their University for forethought and discretion' 1897 05 21

## **1900**

1907 06 11

Some disappointment has been occasioned by the moderate success of women mathematicians this year. Only ten sat for the Tripos and Miss Eva Smith of Newnham is the only wrangler. The highest position ever attained by a woman was in 1890 when Miss Fawcett, daughter of the former blind Postmaster-General, was placed above the Senior Wrangler – G.T. Bennett, Fellow of Emmanuel College. 07 06 11

## **1910**

1910 03 11

A party of five undergraduates attempted to repeat the 'Merry Widow' hoax at the New Theatre but were sadly unsuccessful. It is a well-known rule that undergraduates may not purchase boxes unless accompanied by ladies or some elderly chaperone. A box was ordered in the name of the Hon Miss Neville of Magdalene College, which aroused suspicion. The party comprised three undergraduates and two 'ladies' who were very tall, walked with mannish strides and spoke in a quaint high-pitched falsetto. Mr Redfarn did not take many seconds to spot the disguise. 10 03 11f

1913 09 28

Harrods are offering 12 positions to girls educated at Girton College, though they are not sure such a class of women are appropriate: "I cannot imagine the Girton girl selling woollens over the counter", a manager says. Their temperament is altogether unsuitable and they would find it difficult to adapt to the surroundings. The girls agree: their training fits them for professions. They could do no good in a shop and their knowledge would be wasted. They lead a healthy outdoor life and do not want to be boxed up with just a fortnight's holiday. 13 09 28 p6 CIP

1914 03 27

Miss Ethel Sargent, the well-known botanist of Girton College, enjoys the distinction of being the first woman to hold the office of President of any section of the British Association. But she is refusing to pay the King's Taxes as a protest against being taxed without having a vote. Articles, including microscopic accessories and Zeiss lenses were seized and sold by auction on the Green at Girton. It is the third such sale since 1912 14 03 27b & c

1916 05 17

Miss E.C. Jones, Mistress of Girton – profile – 16 05 17b

## **1920**

1920 05 12

Women and degrees – syndicate appointed to consider whether they should be admitted to membership or how university could co-operate with the women's colleges, are unable to agree - CDN 20 05 12

1920 12 09

University reject admission of women by 192 votes - CDN 20 12 09

1921

Rags seemed to have reached climax after WWI, by 1920 a new kind of misdirected energy, originality & daring is being poured into organising elaborate stunts, hoaxes & escapades; Michaelmas 1921 was great term for rags : Senate opened academic year by debating granting degrees for women; became political issue; first rag of burning gates of Newnham, then on voting day a colossal mock funeral for 'The death of the Varsity' with corpse of last male undergraduate being borne on a bier surrounded by aged mourners whose long grey beards dragged in dust

1921 10 26

University votes against women's degrees; undergraduate mock funeral – photos – 21 10 26b

1922 03 25

There was issued yesterday the report of the Royal Commission on Oxford and Cambridge Universities. "We are unanimous in thinking" (says the Commissioners) "that ample facilities should be offered for the education of women. On the other hand we strongly desire that Cambridge should remain mainly and predominantly a men's university. To give a sense of security we consider that the number of women undergraduates should be 500, which would give a proportion of about one in each ten of the total number of undergraduates" 22 03 25

1927 06 15

Three well-known Cambridge sportsmen who have completed their academic careers distinguished themselves by spending part of the night in the grounds of one of the women's colleges and part in another. At midnight on Saturday they climbed into Newnham, taking with them a tent which they pitched in full view and were not discovered until they were all snug in "bed", when they commenced community singing. Newnham Dons became alarmed and phoned for the police, who turned them out. They then motored to Girton, scaled a twelve-foot wall and pitched the tent. They were not discovered until the early hours of the morning when the earliest risers amongst the lady students saw the strange sight in the middle of the court. 27 06 15

1929 11 27

Women students packed the gallery at the Cambridge Union Society when a motion supporting full University rights for women was carried. A sensation was caused before the debate when it was proposed that in view of the importance of the issue involved the gallery should be cleared but the President ruled that this would cause too much disturbance. Women students lived under a code of rules that could only be described as fatuous; one of the women's colleges allowed its students to go unchaperoned to King's Chapel, but to no other. Girton allowed them to go to the theatre 'provided

the party was of reasonable size', whilst Newnham were permitted provided the party 'was not of unreasonable size' (laughter) CDN 27.11.1929

### 1930

1936 02 06

The Cambridge University Mummers, who are still the only University Dramatic Society to admit women members equally with men in all their activities, are presenting 'Heartbreak House' by Bernard Shaw. In the cast there are four members of Newnham, the most prominent of whom is Miss Teresa Mayor. She will be supported by Beryl Eeman, Cecilia Hopkinson and Deirdre Moore. The play will be produced by George Rylands who is well known for productions at the A.D.C. 36 02 06a

1939 05 06

Miss Dorothy Annie Elizabeth Garrod, of Newnham College, was elected the first woman professor at Cambridge University. Miss Garrod, who is an archaeologist of distinction, was educated at both Oxford and Cambridge, and succeeds Dr. E. H. Minns, of Pembroke College in the Disney Professorship of Archaeology 39 05 12 CIPof [1.1] 39 05 06

### 1940

1947 12 08

The word "Placet" (Latin for "It pleases") said by the Senior and Junior Proctors in unison as they raised their caps concluded the less-than-a-minute-long part of the Congregation in Cambridge Senate House by which it was formally agreed that women should have full status within the University. A handful of women students, undergraduates and other visitors in the gallery heard the decision made. It is planned that the new regulations shall come into force at the beginning of the next academic year in October; they will come under Proctorial supervision and will wear academic dress - 47 12 08 [2.14,2.21,5.3, 8.24]

1948 05 05

The women students of Newnham and Girton will emerge in their New Look in the October term. The gowns which their full University status now entitles them to wear have now been designed, and are on sale at £3 3s. each, no coupons. They are identical with those of the men, except that they have closed sleeves instead of a slit at the opening. This is because it was felt it would be unsuitable to have bare arms showing in summer time, when the girls wear short sleeved dresses. As far as headwear is concerned stiff board was preferred to a soft cap, and squares have been decided upon. These are still in such short supply that most girls will, like the men, go bareheaded for the moment 48 05 05

1948 10 21

When the Queen stood before the Vice Chancellor in Cambridge Senate House today to receive the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Law she was not only a Queen receiving an Honour but also a symbol of the passing of a 700-years-old "tradition" in the university. For, during the whole of the University's history no Queen - and no other woman - has ever before had a degree conferred upon her, because until the recent changes in the statutes giving women full membership the conferring of such an honour was not possible. As the Queen entered the Senate House there was a burst of cheering and clapping. Her scarlet Doctor's robes and her black velvet doctor's cap, made a charming ensemble with the Cambridge blue shade of her dress 48 10 21

1948 10 21

As the Queen left Girton College yesterday evening, following her visit there, many students gathered in the drive made appropriate if unorthodox use of the gowns they now wear as symbols of their recently won rights to be full members of the University. They took off their gowns and waved them in farewell to the Royal lady, who in the morning had symbolised those new rights as she received in the Senate House the first degree to be conferred upon a woman in University history

1948 11 15

It really was women's day at the university Senate House on Saturday. Following the Queen's visit last month came the first historic degree ceremony to include women graduates. Previously they had held only the title of their degrees but now a decree has been passed admitting them to full membership they can proceed in person to take them. 114 were conferred in all. The recipients included a number who had left the colleges many years ago - two from Girton had graduated in the 1890s. Side by side with them were young women who had graduated last year. All were enjoying the first fruits of a successful outcome of a struggle that had lasted 70 years 48 11 15

1948 11 17

Soon the sight of women students in their gowns and proceeding to degrees alongside the men, will become common place, and no one will give them a second thought. It is the "first time" however, which makes news and even the occasion of the first woman to be "progged" becomes a minor act of University history. Members of the colleges had awaited with interest to see on whom this "honour" would befall. Their curiosity was satisfied within three weeks of the beginning of term. The "honour" – said to have been coveted by a number of women students, who tried to attract the attention of the proctor – fell to a third-year anthropology student of Girton, Miss Valida Turner, who was fined for not wearing her gown after dark 48 11 17

1949

Training college for women teachers changes name to Hughes Hall after first principal as becomes recognised institution; had been founded 1885 in Newnham, expanded; new buildings 1895 [3.15,13]

**1950**

1952 06 12

Cambridge University is considering the possibility of increasing the number of women permitted to the University in any one year. The Council of Senate recommends there should be a new autonomous foundation for women students, the number not exceeding 100. They consider there is a great need for women graduates but any increase should not lead to a lowering of standards. Present regulations permit of 1,400 women, one-fifth of the total of men students. Cambridge is doing considerably less than other Universities in providing women with a University education.

1954 10 06

A new chapter in Cambridge University history has opened on an informal note at New Hall, the third foundation for women, where the first 16 students are now in residence. They drew lots for the rather Spartan bedrooms while a 'combination' room is being used for (voluntary) morning services – there is no chapel - and other activities. A rather gloomy downstairs study room is well-equipped with desks and chairs and nearby is an out-of-doors wringer of hefty make. "We can do our own washing and save on laundry bills", said Miss Angela Holder, a petite, attractive Freshman, giving the handle an experimental turn. Miss A.R. Murray, the tutor, says she welcomes the building – a converted guest house - as a temporary home but looks forward to moving to Byron House in 1960

1957 10 16

Is a university education wasted on a woman? Many people are convinced that for a girl to have a long and expensive education, only to get married at the end, is a waste of time and money. Now Cambridge graduate, Judith Hubback, has interviewed married university women for a book 'Wives who went to college'. It is impossible to forecast who will marry and who will not: if a woman never marries she will have to compete with men in her profession, but if she has a family she will need education of other skills. 57 10 16

1959 10 19

A 21-year-old blonde sat down with 200 students in the dining room of Christ's College – and went completely unnoticed. That was not surprising because she was dressed in a grey suit, bright yellow waistcoat and wore thick glasses and a black beard! Elizabeth Grant, a third year medical student had decided to avenge the fair sex for a hoax played on Girton students last week. College regulations allow students to bring in their (male) friends but women are banned. Everything went off beautifully.

She kept her voice down during the meal and although second glances were cast by some, nobody said anything. 59 10 19d

### 1960

1961 02 20

A team from Pan American Airways visited Cambridge speaking to applicants from the girls' colleges to fill their quota for air stewardesses, one of the most glamorous carers in the 20<sup>th</sup>-century.. One said "We thought we might get a nice type of girl from the University – the sort who, once she has got her degree, would like to spend a year or 18 months flying with us. By the time they're 23 they want to marry; you can't blame them really". The firm were quite reconciled to it and it kept their service fresh and active. In spite of the attractive prospects there were very few applicants for interview from Girton or Newnham students 61 02 20

1961 03 21

Women undergraduates are rather spoiled, with ten men to each girl, and marry at a younger age so Newnham has problems finding College Fellows, the Principal complained. Sometimes girls staying in Cambridge after their marriage could continue their work but often it meant recruiting Dons from outside. This brought other problems as Newnham could not afford to pay a good income meaning many candidates were unable to take up the appointment 61 03 21

1961 05 04

Women undergraduates should stop trying to be competitive with the men and become complementary to them instead. There should be optional University classes in cookery, needlework and floral arrangements for the benefit of women, a Girton undergraduate writes in the 'Cambridge Review'. But two Newnham students are indignant that anyone should suppose they are not already proficient in domestic matters when they came up to Cambridge and deny women have no recreation other than working or taking tea 61 05 04

1961 10 18

A 20-year old law student at New Hall was carried unconscious from the Cambridge Union Society debating chamber. She was one of three girls who fought their way in as a protest against 'a niggling absurd and out-of-date rule' which forbids women as debating members. As the guest speakers, Peter Thorneycroft, the Minister of Aviation and Labour MP Richard Crossman looked on, the debate was adjourned. In the scuffles that followed the girl fainted. She was taken to Addenbrooke's Hospital. The debate then continued. 61 10 18a

1962 11 21

Union Society women may now speak [26.8]

1963 11 05

History was made when Janet Hogg, a 321-year-old New Hall undergraduate, became the first woman member of the University Union Society since its formation in 1815. Two Girton women became the first to take part in a debate on the motion "Till death do us part is ridiculous". The motion was rejected. To return home to a wife and family after a day of fighting for his existence was one of the most pleasant and happy things that could happen to a man. 63 11 05, 13a first Janet Hogg [7.16]

1965 10 11

Lucy Cavendish college, Britain's 1<sup>st</sup> graduate college for women to be all-woman college helping those whose careers interrupted : one of a number of 'recognised collegiate societies' rising in Cambridge to meet need of the growing numbers of University officers and active senior members without fellowship and the increasing number of research students, are experimental & University reserves right to withdraw recognition of any that fails; others are Darwin college for men founded by Trinity, St John-s & Caius & University College founded by the University for men & women [1.16,7.19.14]

1965 06 08

New Hall new college buildings opened Queen Mother [8.8]

1965 02 13

Strict male-female segregation rule scrapped by Queens College which makes way for new foundation taking both sexes [15.9]

1966

Union Society favour mixed colleges

1967 06 01

Union Society first woman president Anne Mallelieu [26.10]

1969 03 18

Churchill announce plans to admit women in 1972 - first co-ed move in Cambridge undergraduate college in 700 years [5.9]

1969 01 03

Girton celebrate centenary [6.7]

1969 02 08

Prince Charles crowns Rag Queen- 69 02 08b, 69 02 15a

1969 05 28

King's College to become second to admit women – 69 05 28

1971 12 17

Clare College to offer places to 36 girl undergraduates – 71 12 17

1972

Clare, Kings & Churchill become mixed [5.9]

1973 11 22

1200 march try admit more women & abandon single-sex colleges - oppose attempts to get special Oxbridge legislation in Equal opportunities Bill [24.6]

1973 03 03

The Master of St Catharine's College, Professor Edwin Rich, was involved in a scuffle with women's lib demonstrators last night when 30 of them interrupted the Cambridge college's dinner. College Fellows left the high table and with waiters rushed to the 69-year-old Master's assistance when women demonstrators began struggling with him after he had grabbed a bugle which one woman attempted to blow in his face. The demonstration was aimed at drawing attention to the lack of places for women in Cambridge University. The trouble started immediately after grace had been said and halted waiters in their tracks leaving them poised with trays of grapefruit. The demonstrators - all women - swept into the hall led by a bugler and carrying an assortment of placards on the theme "Sexism – out 73 03 03

1973 05 23

After 700 years of male domination the first woman to be chosen as Vice Chancellor - the effective head of Cambridge University - does not anticipate any particular problems in dealing with her male colleagues. Miss Rosemary Murray, who is president of New Hall, was nominated by the Council of Senate. She will take up her post in two years if the nomination is accepted by the university, usually a formality. She is due to take charge at a difficult time in the university's history, when students are demanding more and more say in the running of its affairs 73 05 23

1974 12 16

Trinity Hall to admit women [10.6]

1975

Dame Rosemary Murray first women Vice Chancellor [5.10]

1975 05 28

Cambridge's largest all-male college, Trinity is to admit women. Graduate women students will be admitted from October 1976 and undergraduate women from October 1978. The college decision puts Trinity fourth in line amongst previous all-male colleges who are now planning to open their door both to women dons and students. In 1976 Sidney Sussex and Selwyn colleges will become co-educational, followed in 1977 by Trinity Hall c75 05 30

1975 11 20

The number of women seeking Cambridge University places has remained virtually unchanged despite the opening of three previously all-male colleges to girl applicants. At present, with three women's and three mixed colleges about 500 women a year are being admitted. By 1978 four more colleges will have become mixed, bringing the expected number to 650 women. Miss Sheila Edmonds, Vice-Principal of Newnham College said while some well-qualified candidates still do not secure a Cambridge place, this would not be true if the total admission were 650, instead of 500 75 11 20

1976 10

Selwyn start to take women [9.9]

1978

Girton College admits men

1979

Dr Marie Axton first woman Proctor [5.11];

1979 08 21

Six more colleges take women [16.7]

**1980**

1980 11 08

An exclusive university dining club may open its doors to the public. The Pitt Club is a miniature men-only London club where prospective members are vetted carefully and anyone without a public school education is likely to be black-balled. It also houses the Hawks Club for university sporting Blues. But it is no longer making money and is looking for tenants to share the former Turkish bath house in Jesus Lane. Strudels, one of the restaurants in the Kite facing eviction, is amongst a number to express an interest. 80 11 08

1981 10 26

Corpus admit women [6.2]

1981 01 28

A Cambridge student has set up a computer dating service for lonely hearts in the university. For just 50p the unattached undergraduate is promised an introduction to the partner of his dreams. Confidential questionnaires drawn up by a student of experimental psychology were sent out and the results loaded on a computer. It matches them up to produce ideal partners and bliss ensues. It is hoped the first couples will be paired off by St Valentine's Day 81 01 28

1982 09 24

St Johns to take women from October [9.7]



1983 03 15

Peterhouse to admit women in 1985 [8.12]

1985

Peterhouse admits women

1985 08 03

Hughes Hall centenary - set up 1885 to train women to teach in secondary schools [7.2]

1986 10 10

Magdalene, the one college in the Oxbridge system where a chap could count on being in the exclusive company of other chaps, is set to go co-educational. The governing body has voted to overturn 444 years of historical precedent and amend the statutes. The news was greeted with glum resignation by some of the present undergraduates. That other bastion of entrenched traditionalism, Peterhouse, finally said yes to women students last year, a trend that started in 1972 when Churchill, Clare and King's went mixed. 86 10 10 [8.5]

1988 05 20

Magdalene is the only college in Cambridge to host candle-lit dinners in the grand hall every night of the week. But other traditional values are changing. The decision to admit women dons and undergraduates has prompted refurbishment of the college's Spartan amenities, bringing in floral curtains and pastel pink wallpaper to the rooms of even the hardest rugby players. Today much of the opposition to the decision has subsided, although the 'Black October' dining society still celebrates the masculine virtues of single-sex colleges. Whether the college's character can survive this quantum leap into the present remains to be seen 88 05 20b

1988 05 20

The trend towards admitting female undergraduates began in 1972 when Churchill, Clare and King's Colleges went mixed. Two of the first girls were from Cambridge schools. By June 1982 when Pembroke 'fell' there were only two colleges left as all-male preserves, then Peterhouse reluctantly bowed to pressure. But when Magdalene's governing body overturned 444 years of historical precedent by voting to let in women an indignant porter flew a black flag at half mast and undergraduates sported black armbands. Three of the original four women's colleges are still single sex, though Girton admitted men in 1977. 88 05 20c

1988 10 12

Thirty-six women undergraduates arrived at Magdalene College amid a blaze of publicity breaking 444 years of history as a male-only college, the last in Cambridge. They had been warned about the dreaded Black October dining society whose members donned funereal armbands when it was announced that the college was to 'fall', and expected a lukewarm welcome. Surprisingly the reverse is true. One said "I think some of the men were frightened that the girls were going to be extremely militant or feminist. But they seem quite pleased and say it is a lot more social" 88 10 12